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**ART EDUCATION AT SCHOOL: QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND  
SEARCH FOR OBJECTIVE CRITERIA**

Stukalova Olga Vadimovna (a), Alekseeva Larisa Leonidovna (b)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Federal State Budget Scientific Institution “Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies of the Russian Academy of Education”, 119121, 8/1, Pogodinskaya St., Moscow, Russian Federation, e-mail: [chif599@gmail.com](mailto:chif599@gmail.com)

(b) Federal State Budget Scientific Institution “Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies of the Russian Academy of Education”, 119121, 8/1, Pogodinskaya St., Moscow, Russian Federation, e-mail:

[larissaalekseeva63@gmail.com](mailto:larissaalekseeva63@gmail.com).

*Abstract*

The article reveals some findings of a study on a problem associated with developing objective criteria for evaluating the quality of general art education for basic and advanced learning of art and culture items. The article also contains an analytical review of existing methods to assess the quality of general art education (professional, fine art, problem development); shows the criteria for each of the approaches, and demonstrates their obvious advantages and some limitations. Based on the study conducted, the authors introduce optimum indicators for an objective assessment of the quality of education for schoolchildren grades 1 through 9 on such disciplines as “Music”, “Visual Arts”, “World Art Culture” in a modern secondary education school (such as intellect, creativity, communicability, etc.); describe the newly developed criteria to assess the quality of teaching art and culture-related disciplines (knowledge of the subject matter, methodological training and interaction with students and colleagues, creative approach to teaching and technical or artistic performance skills). The work outlines general, specific and additional criteria for assessing the quality of general art education system (educational esthetic environment in the school, participation in School Olympics on art and global art culture, presence of intra-school model of extracurricular activities on general culture education, etc.). The article draws conclusions on the necessity and possibility of assessing the education quality by a combination of three components – children’s education, teaching activities for art and culture-related disciplines, and organization of the entire general art education system in the modern-day school.

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**Keywords:** Criteria, objectivity, quality, assessment, art education.



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## 1. Introduction

Modern world, rapidly changing under the influence of continuous scientific and technical progress, changes humans just as rapidly and proactively, affecting them in a special way. Proliferation of information and communication technologies limiting “live”, personal, emotionally colored communications for evident reasons, instructiveness and set algorithm of actions, apparent prevalence of techno in all of its aspects are becoming not only factors for successful development of society in general, but also a territory of significant risks.

This lack of safety is caused by a whole range of extremely diverse reasons. According to the authors, the first and foremost of these is growing isolation and aloofness of growing young people, “withdrawing into themselves”, their excessive submersion into the virtual world, increased attention to modern technical novelties, gradually making the lives of modern people easier, but often limiting their social circle, including their communication with their surrounding persons, primarily their relatives. One can also mention new tendencies, and also standardization, undoubtedly required relevant to standards, rules and certain characteristics, in other words, all things that relate to regulation of the fields of production, education, safety and security, etc. (Verger, Fontdevila, & Parcerisa, 2019). But it is quite disputable when it relates, for example, to a human being itself, their individual, artistic perception of the outside world, aesthetic attitude to reality, various activities, including creative ones.

And in this sense, art in all of its diversity of traditional and emerging forms (music, visual art, dancing, theater, computer animation and design, electronic music, etc.), time-honored aesthetic ideals, artistic values, that very spiritual and ethical experience of the past generations is what gives people a unique opportunity to learn about the world and themselves, broadens communication borders and allows to preserve and develop humanistic traits in humans. In this context, the significance and role of art education becomes apparent, in other words, we are talking about education with the help of art, aimed at harmonious development of intellectual, creative and individual abilities of children and youth, forming of emotion and communication culture of the young generation, familiarizing students with cultural diversity of the modern world and national cultural priorities. (Donev, 2018; Duffy, Wickersham-Fish, Rademaker, & Wetzler, 2018; Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016; Márque, Peña, Jones, Orange, & Simieou, 2018).

## 2. Problem Statement

In all diversity of existing theoretical standpoints, methodical approaches and fundamental views on the potential of art and artistic activities, researchers of the past and modern scientists see eye to eye on one thing: intellectual and creative, general cultural, emotional and communicative development of schoolchildren strongly depends on art education, and more precisely, its quality in modern school (Stukalova et al., 2018). This quality in all of its aspects is what ensures the result – an all-round and harmoniously developed personality, capable of artistic self-realization and education throughout the whole life. And in this sense, the role of art education can hardly be underestimated. (Paslaru, Morari, & Gagim, 2016) let us also outline the approaches (Afrikaner, 2018; Hope, 2019; Watts, 2018).

We would like to note that we are discussing general art education in Russian schools. Currently it includes compulsory studying of such subjects as “Music”, “Visual Art” (1-7 years of comprehensive

school); “Art” and “History of World Art” (8-11 years depending on the options of realized education plans formed, among other considerations, for the benefit of the participants of education relations) (Let us remind you, for example: Dziedziewicz & Karwowski, 2015; Or compare: Andrews, 2017).

Currently there are various historically developed approaches and criteria for evaluation of the quality of art education in modern Russian schools, even despite the existing and effective Federal State Educational Standard (Federal'nyj gosudarstvennyj obrazovatel'nyj standart, 2009, 2010, 2012). It is enough to mention the “professional” approach, when academic achievements of comprehensive school students are evaluated in the context of criterial level of formulation of specialized pre-profession skills and abilities (Krasil'nikova & Yashmolkina, 2018; Krasil'nikova, Yashmolkina, & Nekhaeva, 2019). Within the framework of the school “Music” subject, it generally means an evaluation of musical performance (vocal or instrumental, solo or within an ensemble), where the primary evaluated qualities are artistry, inspiration and emotional generosity. Besides that, evaluations include the level of development of special musical skills and comprehension of a certain volume of knowledge (solfege and theoretical conceptions, which are more characteristic for children’s music schools realizing additional pre-professional programs).

Regarding the “Visual Art” school subject, within the framework of “professional” approach, the quality of academic achievements is traditionally measured according to such criteria, as originality of works, artistic individuality and the level of mastery of work techniques with various materials for realization of artistic conceptions. Development level of special depictive skills and standardized volume of knowledge (art competence, knowledge of special terms) are also evaluated (Nemenskij, Nemenskaya, Goryaeva, Koblova, & Muhina, 2015). One can state that within the framework of this approach to evaluation of the quality of comprehensive art education, the keynote is the activity-related, practical component (or side).

In modern practice of comprehensive art education one can also encounter the so-called “art historian” approach. (Medkova, 2017; Naumenko & Aleev, 2018.). It mostly comes down to deep and thorough analysis of art and accumulated artistic values of mankind in general, studies of the stages of historical development of different kinds and genres of art, specifics of realization of its image content in different periods. A special place is given to art as spiritual activity of people, influence of artistic culture and art on the development of the whole human civilization, meaning of art in intercultural communication and inculturation of the young generation.

For the most part, this approach is characteristic for studying of educational subjects relevant to art and culture in 8-11 years of comprehensive school. And accordingly, quality evaluation within the framework of this approach suggests rather deep knowledge about the studied area in general and artistic legacy of Russian and foreign cultural figures and artists of various times. In addition to this criterion – schoolchildren featuring highly developed abilities to reason and analyze, classify, generalize and compare, draw substantiated conclusions and make deductions. Thus, the peculiarity of this approach lies in evaluation of theoretical component (or side) of children’s comprehensive art education.

On the verge of XX – XXI centuries, common educational practice also begins to adopt the “problem and development” approach, based on the conceptual ideas of the theory of developing education of Davydov (1996). This approach is reflected most vividly in relevant software, teaching and learning materials (Shkolyar & Usacheva, 2018), in which problematization of the content of musical education is

fully reflected with the help of specially developed methods. Within the framework of this approach, the quality of education and its criterial evaluation are inseparably bound with the level of forming the basics of artistic thinking of students, with musical creative works of children from the standpoint of a composer (composition) – performer (performance) – listener (perception), and also with individual activities, namely those artistic by content and educational by form of their realization.

We should also mention the current attempt to create a modern model for evaluation of quality of comprehensive art education (Alekseeva, 2018). Here the author suggests evaluating the quality of art subject education considering the principles of art pedagogics, relevant methods and techniques, age-related specifics of 1-9 year students, priority types of children’s artistic and creative activities, diversity of forms of education, requirements of federal state educational standards, etc. Despite all the advantages of the developed model, it is clear that comprehensive art education is merely one part, albeit specific and inseparable, of comprehensive education of schoolchildren. And for fairer evaluation of quality, it makes sense to take account also of certain other components or elements of the Russian system of comprehensive education in general.

Let us note that the existing approaches, despite all their theoretical and practical value, provide mostly one-sided pictures of the quality of children’s art education based on diverse criteria. Thus, the importance and undoubted value of art for harmonious development of a growing young person, for development of their artistic individuality, intellect, culture of emotions and communication foregrounds the need to develop a new modern and specialized set of instruments for evaluation of quality of academic achievements of students. Such set of instruments will allow us to evaluate quality more objectively and extensively considering the incredibly tight interrelations and interdependence of the most essential aspects: studying and teaching art and cultural subjects in a specific comprehensive school within the framework of the currently existent education system.

### **3. Research Questions**

What indicators should be used to objectively assess school art education quality? What tools are needed to obtain data reflecting the students’ educational achievements in Art and culture subjects?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Indicators identification for the students’ art education quality objective assessment; criterion base of students’ educational achievements in “Music”, “Fine Arts”, “World Art Culture”; the study of correlation issues in relation to the art education quality, the quality of teaching art and culture, the art education organization at modern school.

### **5. Research Methods**

In a number of methods used: a generalization of art and pedagogical teachers’ experience, a data comparative analysis; discrete observation, questioning, testing, rating; study of normative, instructive and other documents of students’ educational achievements in Art, including participation in competitions and

festivals, analysis of Art teachers' professional activity in general educational organizations, data processing.

## 6. Findings

The study was conducted throughout the second half of 2018 and the first half of 2019 with participation of music and visual art teachers, directors, methodologists and facilitators of a number of comprehensive educational institutions. This includes Municipal Educational Institution "Yanino Secondary School" (the Leningrad Region, Vsevolzhsky district, Yanino township), State Budgetary Comprehensive Educational Institution "School No. 2010 after the Hero of the Soviet Union M.P. Sudakov" (Moscow), State Budgetary Educational Institution "Gymnasium No. 1619 after M.A. Tsvetayeva" (Moscow). Total number of pedagogues participating in this work estimated 11 people, total number including administrative personnel and 1-9 year students – 215 people.

According to the results of conducted questionnaire survey and testing of students, study and comparative analysis of acquired intermediary academic results, optimal indicators for objective evaluation of the quality of art subject education of 1-9 year students (Music, Visual Arts, History of World Art). These indicators are intellectuality, creativity and communication skills. Let us review the specified indicators in more detail.

Considering the existing fundamental Russian works regarding human intellect in general (Modern researches ..., 2015, etc.), emotional intellect and its development (Petrushin, 2016), within the framework of the present study, intellectuality means mental ability of a student and its application in art lessons regarding artistic perception, artistic thinking, artistic imagination. Creativity in the context of the present work means the expression of own individuality by a growing person in the process of creating new, original products by artistic means. Communication skills are understood in this context as emotional interaction of a student with their peers and teacher at art lessons for exchange of aesthetic experience and artistic information.

According to the authors, evaluation of the quality of academic achievements of students for art and cultural subjects within the framework of the abovementioned and realized federal state educational standard also requires a separate review and further search for objective criteria. Currently, such evaluation is performed as distinctly detailed and planned personalized, subject and metasubject results of learning of the main educational program for each of art and cultural subjects. However, in wide educational practice, such particularization regarding the said academic subjects, detailed description, "step-by-step" execution and rulemaking often lead to a loss of interest and dedication both among students and teachers.

Besides, both the theory and practice of comprehensive art education of the past and modern times have known numerous and controversial examples of biased and not always objective evaluation of quality in general (Campos-Martínez & Morales, 2016; Ferm, Vinge, Väkevä, & Zandén, 2017), and, relevant to art and cultural subjects, set patterns of pedagogical thinking, simplified, often primitive ideas about the artistic development of a growing person and individual artistic capabilities, etc. (Problemy tvorcheskogo ..., 2016, etc.). In this regard, it seems necessary to develop also such promising criteria, which could ensure the required quality of art education in accordance with the federal state educational standard and

take more account of peculiarities of art and cultural subjects, and, most importantly, would enable teachers to facilitate prompt evaluation of the quality of academic achievements for these subjects.

The following objective criteria for evaluation of comprehensive art education are suggested for future use: informational, activity-related, educational for the basic level of learning of academic subjects “Music”, “Visual Arts”, “History of World Art”; reflexive criterion is taken into consideration at advanced levels of subject learning. Detailed description of the developed criteria is provided in Table 1. “Promising criteria for evaluation of quality of comprehensive art education”.

**Table 01.** Promising criteria for evaluation of quality of comprehensive art education

№№	Criteria and their detailed description	Levels and numerical indicators
<b>Basic level of learning of academic subjects</b>		
<b>Informational criterion</b>		
1	Complete familiarity with all studied materials of the program, profound knowledge, including additional information; deep understanding of content of the materials, independent search for the required additional materials; confident substantiated answers with bright examples, existence of independent judgements on various issues and problems of art and culture in general.	Maximum (6 – 8)
	Sufficient familiarity with most studied topics, knowledge within the limits of the program; generalized understanding of content of materials, recurrent independent search for the required additional materials; sufficiently confident and substantiated answers, existence of independent judgements on certain issues and problems of art and culture.	Medium (3 – 5)
	Familiarity with content of a small number of topics of studied materials (less than 1/3), demonstration of an insignificant volume of knowledge within the framework of the studied program; almost complete absence of skills of independent search for additional materials.	Minimum (0 – 2)
<b>Activity-related criterion</b>		
2	High level of artistic and creative activity in various types of classroom activities, active participation in competitions of performer and artistic skills, project activities, Olympiads, etc.	Maximum (6 – 8)
	Significantly high level of artistic and creative activity in certain types of classroom activities (no less than three types), recurrent participation in competitions of performer skills, project activities, Olympiads, etc.	Medium (3 – 5)
	Almost complete absence of artistic and creative activity at least in one type of classroom activity, total lack of enthusiasm for participation in competitions of performer skills, project activities, Olympiads, etc.	Minimum (0 – 2)
<b>Educational criterion</b>		
3	High level of independent, active cognitive interest to broadening of artistic horizons; enthusiasm and active visits to museums, plays, concerts, etc. including virtual visits; independent desire for practical application of knowledge in varied artistic and creative practice.	Maximum (6 – 8)
	Recurrent independent, active cognitive interest to broadening of artistic horizons; recurrent visits to museums, musical plays, concerts, etc., including virtual visits; recurrent desire for practical application of knowledge in certain types of artistic and creative practice	Medium (3 – 5)
	Almost complete absence of independent, active cognitive interest to broadening of artistic horizons; unwillingness to visit museums, musical plays, concerts, etc., including virtual visits	Minimum (0 – 2)
<b>Advanced level of academic subject studies</b>		
4	<b>Reflexive criterion</b>	

	Constant, deep and complete awareness and comprehension of own feelings, aesthetic emotions, sensations caused by works of art of various styles and genres, art events and cultural phenomena; critical and objective evaluation of art and cultural works, confident demonstration of own viewpoints in a dialogue, analysis of products of own artistic creative works; constant broadening of own cultural experience	Maximum (6 – 8)
	Periodical, sufficiently deep and full awareness and comprehension of own feelings, aesthetic emotions, sensations caused by works of art of various styles and genres, certain art events and cultural phenomena; demonstration of own viewpoints in a dialogue, products of own creative works; recurrent comprehension and broadening of own cultural experience	Medium (3 – 5)
	Almost complete absence of awareness and comprehension of own feelings, aesthetic emotions, sensations caused by art works of certain styles and genres, certain art events and cultural phenomena; lack of own viewpoints in a dialogue, lack of products of own creative works and desire for broadening of own cultural experience	Minimum (0 – 2)

Currently, the suggested criteria can be applied in addition to the existing system of planned individualized, subject and metasubject results within the framework of federal state educational standards.

Peculiarities of the Russian education system in general ensure a close interrelation between the quality of children’s comprehensive education and the quality of teaching academic subjects, including art and cultural subjects in modern school. This specific interrelation currently holds a lot of attention in the context of rapid development of the whole education system, which allows to consider the criteria suggested hereunder to be vital for objective evaluation of the quality of comprehensive art education.

Based on generalization of artistic and pedagogical experience of art and culture teachers and detailed analysis of their professional activities, criteria have been developed for evaluation of quality of teaching of school academic subjects “Music”, “Visual arts” and “History of World Art”. Considering the peculiarities of the said academic subjects, the following generalized criteria have been suggested: mastery of subject-related knowledge; methodical training and interaction with students and colleagues; creative approach to teaching. For evaluation of the quality of teaching of academic subjects “Music”, “Visual arts” and “History of World Art”, it is also essential to include such specific criterion as performance skill (for music teachers) or artistry (for visual arts teacher).

For evaluation of quality of teaching of the academic subject “History of World Art”, specific criterion is not required. This is predetermined by the very content of the studied course, and also the fact that traditionally this academic subject is taught in modern schools not exclusively by art teachers and cultural scientists, but also by teachers of history and literature. Accordingly, during their professional education, a future music or visual arts teacher has the opportunity to improve their performer training (playing a certain musical instrument, solo or ensemble singing, etc.), special skills in the field of painting, drawing, composition, etc. Specific nature of the academic subject “History of World Art” and the area of professional education of future history and literature teachers does not involve training of performance or artistic skills.

Comprehensive art education is an organic and inseparable part and element of the whole system of Russian children’s comprehensive education. It is widely known that the efficiency of organization and functioning of a single element greatly affects the performance of the whole system. Thus, for evaluation of quality of both student performance and teaching of art and cultural subjects, it makes sense to review

and evaluate as a whole the existing art education system in a specific school. Three groups of criteria have been developed for that purpose, including general, specific and additional ones.

General criteria: educational aesthetic school environment; number of teachers of art and history of world art with proper education level (specialist's or master degree); learning results for the main educational program of general comprehensive education for art and cultural subjects. Specific criteria: qualification of art teachers; participation in Art and History of World Art Olympiads; availability of an internal school model for arrangement of vocational activities ("general cultural" area). Additional criteria: learning results for the additional educational program (or chosen course) of general or secondary comprehensive education for "History of World Art"; arrangement of school events within the framework of art subjects and history of world art; arrangement of outside-school events for general cultural development of students.

In order to avoid excessive complexity and to simplify the whole procedure of evaluation of quality of student education and teaching of art and cultural subjects, promising criteria for basic and advanced learner levels and the whole system of art education, it seems appropriate to adopt a three-level ordinal scale (minimum, medium, maximum, where numerical indicators inside the boundaries of each of the suggested levels can vary within the set limits, for example, from 1 to 3; see example in Table 1). In its complete, general view, the developed criterial basis for evaluation of quality in the totality of all its constituent parts is presented in Table 2 (see next section).

## **7. Conclusion**

According to the results of conducted study devoted to the search for objective criteria for evaluation of quality of comprehensive art education in modern school, the following conclusions have been drawn:

82 % of music, visual arts and history of world art teachers, facilitators and methodical experts, including representatives of administrative personnel of educational institutions, deem intellectuality, creativity and communication skills as optimal indicators for objective evaluation of the quality of modern art education of school students;

Within the framework of performance of all necessary actions for study and search for objective criteria for evaluation of quality of education in the field of art, special attention must be paid to the development of special criteria for students (18% of the total number of participating children) that do not demonstrate medium or high results at the present stage of their development, including intellectual, creative and communicative development;

The suggested promising criteria – informational, activity-related and educational (basic level) and reflexive (advanced level) – are practicable to be used for evaluation of the quality of education in the field of art in modern schools in addition to the existing system of planned results within the framework of federal state educational standards (54% of teachers among the participants of the study);

Comparing the results acquired through the currently existing system for quality evaluation and the developed promising criteria respective to the peculiarities of art subjects provides an opportunity to review and evaluate the existing educational achievements of students from different sides, and more objectively (54% of adult participants);



The developed criterial base for evaluation of quality of teaching academic art subjects for modern comprehensive school, in the aggregate of its generalized and specific criteria, allows to obtain the necessary data and increase the motivation of teachers and administration for prompt execution of all the required evaluation procedures (72% of adult participants) (Table 2. “Criterial basis for evaluation of quality of comprehensive art education in modern school”).

**Table 02.** Criterial basis for evaluation of quality of comprehensive art education in modern school

<b>Optimal indicators for objective evaluation of quality of comprehensive art education of students</b>		
Intellectuality	Creativity	Communication skills
<b>Criteria for evaluation of the quality of teaching academic subjects “Music”, “Visual arts”, “History of World Art”</b>		
General criteria		
Mastery of subject-related knowledge	Methodical training and interaction with students and colleagues	Artistic approach to teaching
Specific criterion		
Performance skill (only for the academic subject “Music”)		Artistry (only for the academic subject “Visual Arts”)
<b>Criteria for evaluation of the quality of the school system of comprehensive art education</b>		
General criteria		
Educational aesthetic environment of the school	Number of art and history of world art teachers with proper level of education (specialist’s or master degree)	Learning results for the main educational program of general comprehensive education for art and cultural subjects
Specific criteria		
Qualification of art teachers	Participation in Art and History of World Art Olympiads	Availability of an internal school model for arrangement of vocational activities in general cultural area
Additional criteria		
Learning results for the additional educational program (or chosen course) of general or secondary comprehensive education for “History of World Art”	Arrangement of school events within the framework of art subjects and history of world art	Arrangement of outside-school events for general cultural development of students

The suggested general, specific and additional criteria combined with an elementary ordinal three-level scale provide the opportunity for on-the-fly evaluation of the quality of arrangement of the system of art education of a specific school, reveal its advantages and flaws and manage it for further improvement (64% of administrative personnel and teachers);

The analysis of professional activities of art teachers in institutions of general education, discrete observations and rating, studying various materials relevant to academic achievements of students in art subjects, including participation of children in competitions and festivals during the abovementioned period have demonstrated a pressing need for continuous renovation of the system for evaluation of comprehensive art education;

The analysis of student learning results for main education program of general comprehensive education in art subjects has demonstrated the direct interrelation and correlational dependence of the

quality of education of students and the quality of subject teaching from the arrangement of the system of art education in modern school;

The developed set of pedagogical instruments allows to conduct complex and objective evaluation of the quality of education of 1-9 year students for subjects “Music”, “Visual Arts”, “History of World Art”, teaching quality and arrangement of the system of art education in modern school (72% of the total number of all adult participants);

Prospects of the conducted study require an increase of the total number of participants including students of primary and general comprehensive art education, methodical experts, music, visual arts and history of world art teachers and leaders of general education institutions from various regions for further approbation and implementation of the developed materials.

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